

of the place to be assigned to economic interests in the life of society that change has in recent centuries been most comprehensive in its scope, and most sensational in its consequences. The isolation of economic aims as a specialized object of concentrated and systematic effort, the erection of economic criteria into an independent and authoritative standard of social expediency, are phenomena which, though familiar enough in classical antiquity, appear, at least on a grand scale, only at a comparatively recent date in the history of later civilizations. The conflict between the economic outlook of East and West, which impresses the traveller to-day, finds a parallel in the contrast between mediaeval and modern economic ideas, which strikes the historian.

The elements which combined to produce that revolution are too numerous to be summarized in any neat formula. But, side by side with the expansion of trade and the rise of new classes to political power, there was a further cause, which, if not the most conspicuous, was not the least fundamental. It was the contraction of the territory within which the spirit of religion was conceived to run. The criticism which dismisses the concern of Churches with economic relations and social organization as a modern innovation finds little support in past history. What requires explanation

is not the
view that these matters are part of the
province of
religion, but the view that they are not.
When the
age of the Reformation begins, economics
is still a
branch of ethics, and ethics of theology ; all
human
activities are treated as falling within a
single scheme,
whose character is determined by the
spiritual destiny
of mankind ; the appeal of theorists is to
natural
law, not to utility; the legitimacy of
economic trans-
actions is tried by reference, less to the
movements
of the market, than to moral standards
derived from
the traditional teaching of the Christian
Church ; the
Church itself is regarded as a society wielding
theoretical,